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## Magical Realism as Historical Discourse Reflected on Eka Kurniawan's *Beauty is A Wound*

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### Abstract

This study aims to uncover magical realism as historical discourse portrayed in the novel *Beauty is A Wound* by Eka Kurniawan. Descriptive qualitative method used in this study. The data were collected by reading, classifying and interpreting. The result is the novel *Beauty is A Wound* has five elements of magical realism as Faris stated, they are; irreducible elements, phenomenal world, the unsettling doubt, merging realms and disruptions of time, space and identity. In relation with magical realism, New Historicism also applied to unearth Indonesia historical discourse since the time of late Dutch colonization, the invasion of Japan, the Independence Era and the New Order Era. Then, the massacre of everyone who were labeled as communist. And the genocide of all the thugs or *preman* in order to make safer and better society. In this novel, the history of Indonesia was camouflaged and mixed with magical realism because every event that categorized as magical realism led to the past events which related to the history of Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Some will say history is series of events which exactly happened in the past. Some will say history is his story which by means it's created or constructed by those whose power to written them down. It can be concluded not all the stories mankind ever read or heard are not totally true as a wholeness, some parts will be added or eliminated depends on the "power" wishes. History is debate, history is discussion, and history is a conversation. Hugh Trevor-Roper wrote in 1957, 'history that is not controversial is dead history'. While some of this controversy comes from the pronouncements of historians as public intellectuals addressing the present day, much of it comes from them arguing with each other. The collective noun for historians is – honestly – an 'argumentation'. ([www.historytoday.com/question-interpretation](http://www.historytoday.com/question-interpretation))

When it comes to history, it always can be manipulated as long as it's in accordance with the "power" wishes. Since just like Joseph Goebbels said "If you repeat a lie often enough, people will believe it, and you will even come to believe it yourself." It's even harder to change, even though a little, the stories that live inside the society for generations through generations, especially in a country with long bloody history like Indonesia.

Indonesia is a developed country in Southeast Asia that has a long journey, colonized and civil wars are only some small parts of them. Colonized by Dutch as long as 350 years according to the history that taught, 3,5 years colonized by Japan in the middle of World War II and faced civil wars which caused one of the horrible genocide that ever happened to mankind. There are also stories about magic which is real or nowadays it's called magical realism.

The term magical realism, first coined by Franz Roh in the early twentieth century to describe a new, neo-realistic, style in German painting, and then applied by Angel Flores to criticize Latin American literary works produced

by Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez. According to Barton & Hudson (1999) in literature, magical realism is a term used to describe a situation or an event that is a combination between everyday realities and supernatural elements that woven seamlessly into one single story.

Still relating to history and magical realism, we may find a work which influenced by history and magical realism. Here, *Beauty is A Wound* is the example novel, which contains magical realism as the way of telling the stories with historical background of Indonesia. This novel talked about the late colonized era of the Dutch, the coming of Japan and the civil war faced by Indonesia people. Something which can be called as magical realism in this novel can be seen at the very beginning when Dewi Ayu, the descendant of the Dutch and the most beautiful prostitute in Halimunda rose from the grave after twenty-one years being dead.

The ghosts, evil spirit who seeks revenge, Dewi Ayu who rose from the dead, the battle of the thugs which lasted in seven days and seven nights, and many other supernatural events happened in the novel are quiet interesting even for Indonesian's people since it's like listening or reading old folklores and the likes. Stories in a package of magical realism with history as their elements are something unusual and not taught in the school. It is hoped that this research will be able to trigger the readers to be accustomed to their very own kind of stories and questioning the history itself.

There are some studies related to magical realism and historical discourse. Ahmad & Afsar (2014) in their article entitled "Magical Realism, Social Protest and Anti-Colonial Sentiments in One Hundred Years of Solitude: An Instance of Historiographic Metafiction". In their article, they highlighted Gabriel García Márquez's use of magical realism in connection to his portrayal of anti-colonial sentiments in his epic novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*, 1967/1970). To study the novel, we define García Márquez's response to the political condition of Latin America in the

backdrop of the postcolonial paradigm. Highlighting that magical realism enables a writer to challenge the authenticity of the so-called objective reality and at the same time attempts to “write back to the Centre” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, ix), we draw attention to the technique of magical realism as an important tool employed to register social protest against the lingering effects of the process of colonialism. We also address the question as to how the moments of magical realism in the novel overlap with various historical dimensions of Latin America, especially Colombia’s ability to raise constructs of protest of varying degrees. Mahmudah (2016) had done her research entitled “Magical Realism in Aḥmad Sa’dāwiy’s *Frankenstein fī Bagdād*”. She discussed the use of magical realism as aliterary device in the Iraqi noel *Frankenstein fī Bagdad* written by Ahmad Sa’dawiy. The novel is set in the period of inter-ethnic conflict which arose after the American invasion of 2003. Hadi, the main character of the novel “created a monster” namely Syismah from the corpses of the many bomb victims in Baghdad. Sa’dawiy combined setting of the novel with belief of the Iraq people, horoscope practice, and magic, in mystical and illogical atmosphere. The author of this research has found that this novel consist of five magical elements according to Faris. Those elements are: irreducible elements, phenomenal world, merging realms, the unsettling doubt, the disruptions of time and space.

There are also some studies highlighting discourse. First, the study conducted by Rosyidi (2015) in “Bittersweet Cultural Acceptance As A Representation Of Skin Colour Differentiation In Toni Morrison” Short Story Sweetness”. This study highlighted the discourse about skin color and aimed aims to describe the bittersweet cultural acceptance as Black and White colour skin recognition as a representation of skin colour differentiation in Toni Morrison’s short story Sweetness. It applies to use descriptive-qualitative data. The material object analyzed is the study of Toni Morrison short story Sweetness published in *New Yorker* magazine (February 9, 2015). The formal object is the study of this short

story seen from the bittersweet cultural acceptance as Black and White colour skin recognition as a representation of skin colour differentiation. Data are analyzed by applying Pierce’s theory of Semiotics. The result will be the differentiation of people can be seen from the genetic skin differences, different usage of bible, public places, and salaries. Another discourse related to skin color also discussed by Rosyidi & Sisbiyanto (2018) in “Questioning Rejection of Becoming American As Cultural Differentiation Represented in Toni Morrison’s Novel *Beloved*”. In this study, the discourse about discrimination which occurred in the basis on skin color. Racial groups express preferences for individuals with lighter skins. Racism itself can be defined as a set of institutional conditions of group inequality and an ideology of racial discrimination. Morrison in her novels depicts the behaviors as one realization of discrimination. Seeing the data concerning on the construction of black people as differentiated ethnic group culturally that becomes a discourse to be rejected, this article aims at explaining the construction of black people as differentiated ethnic group culturally that becomes a discourse to be rejected. The analysis arrives at the question about the differentiation as a means of difficult acceptance.

Amalina & Rosyidi (2017) pointed the discourse about women subordination in “Imprisonment As A Result Of Women Subordination 194 Reflected In Maya Angelou ‘S Poems’”. This research is aimed to describe the imprisonment of African American people, especially women, in the case of patriarchy and women subordination through Maya Angelou’s selected poems entitled—*Caged Bird*l,—*Still I Rise*l and—*Woman Work*l. This research discusses the meaning behind the poems that reflected Maya Angelou’s life experience relating to women subordination and freedom. Feminism approach is applied to analyze the concept of freedom in women subordination and patriarchy in this research. The paper points to how the concept of gender intertwines with labor, ethnics, kinship and gender domination. Without aiming to paint a detailed picture of feminism, the paper

explores how ideas developed in these inquiries question the taken-for-granted assumption about the universality of women's subordination and challenge the emancipation prerequisite of feminist agenda.

Sukrisno & Rosyidi (2016) in "A Challenge Towards Tradition Relating To Children Treatment Differentiation As Reflected On Rabindranath Tagore's Home-Coming" highlighted the discourse about children and cultural tradition. Children are treated by their parent reflecting to the cultural-bound tradition where they live. Different place to live culturally results different way of treating them. This study aims to explain Tagore's idea as a challenge towards tradition relating to differentiation of children treatment, especially in India, reflected on Rabindranath Tagore's short story Home-Coming. Binary oppositions as structure and their relation to the Tagore's moment of life and historical context when he lived qualitatively become the data of this inquiry. This study uses narrative inquiry research design. Drawing Goldmann's genetic structuralism theoretical framework, this paper reveals the challenges towards children treatment tradition relating to differentiation in India. An important implication of this study is the need to understand Indian society's tradition as world vision manifested in Tagore's idea in creating this short story.

A little bit different with my study which aims to uncover magical realism as historical discourse portrayed in the novel *Beauty is A Wound* by Eka Kurniawan.

## METHODS

This is a descriptive qualitative study according to Polkinghorne, it relies on linguistic rather than numerical data, and employs meaning-based rather than statistical forms of data analysis (Polkinghorne, 1983). In analyzing the data, the researcher used Faris's magical realism elements in order to uncover magical realism within the novel and applied New Historicism by Stephen Greenblatt to reveal and

analyze the historical discourses found in the novel.

The material object of this study is the Novel entitled *Beauty is A Wound* by Eka Kurniawan. The formal object of this study is the novel *Beauty is A Wound* which using magical realism as a way of telling series of events and discover the discourses within and interpret them using new historicism perspective which can be seen in form of dialogue and monologue of the characters, words, phrases and sentences

There are two types of data in this study, they are primary data which taken from the material object, which is novel entitled *Beauty is A Wound* by Eka Kurniawan. In addition, the secondary data of this study taken from books, articles, essays and websites.

In collecting the data, the writer does some steps as (1) Reading. The researcher reads carefully and comprehensively to obtain the needed data. (2) Classifying. The writer classifies them into group of quotations which based on the purpose of the study. (3) Interpreting. The writer selects and interprets the appropriate data to assist the analysis.

In analyzing the data of this study, the researcher used several steps of new historicism proposed by Bressler (2003), they are; 1) investigates the social rules and dictates found within a text, and all reflections of a work's historical situation, 2) Investigates the standards of behavior as reflected in a society's rules of decorum, 3) Investigates a text's significance and the complex social structure, 4) Questioning his owns assumptions and methods, 5) Viewing history and literature as social discourse and battlegrounds for conflicting beliefs, actions, and customs.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Magical Realism Portrayed in Eka Kurniawan's *Beauty is A Wound*

Magical realism is still debatable as a genre, since it derived from cultural perspective of the writers and one of the reasons it's called magic is taken from Eurocentric point of view, it is still

interesting form of writings. As Faris has stated, magical realism has five characteristics; irreducible elements, phenomenal world, unsettling doubt, merging realms, and disruption of time, space and identity. Here, the writer presents how magical realism is portrayed in the novel *Beauty is A Wound*.

### ***Irreducible Elements***

The first criteria of magical realism as Faris has defined it. Dewi Ayu, the prostitute who rose again from her grave after twenty-one years of being dead. What she had done was completely against the law of universe or nature. What's dead stayed dead. The dead don't come back to walk along the living. But, Dewi Ayu did it. Even the neighborhood of her came to pay some visit. The one who cursed her for being a prostitute, *kyai jahro*, even believed that she was pure since no one came back from the grave. This magical, if not miraculous, thing could be accepted as the time went by as quoted below;

For a number of days, Dewi Ayu, busy with the visits of old friends who wanted to hear stories about the world of the dead, could ignore the presence of the annoying monster in her house. Even the *kyai*, who years ago had led her funeral with reluctance and looked at her with the disgust a young girl feels for earthworms, came to visit her with the virtuous manners of the pious in front of a saint, and with sincerity said that her rising again was like a miracle, and surely no one would be granted such a miracle if she wasn't pure. (Kurniawan, 2016; 25)

As the one who came back from the dead, Dewi Ayu was like a prophet or saint. Actually, Dewi Ayu was not the first person who had done such unbelievable thing. Before she was born, there was someone who also did almost the same thing, her own grandmother, Ma Iyang. If Dewi Ayu came back from the world of the dead to the world of the living, then on the contrary, Ma Iyang disappeared from the world of the living and vanished into thin air or to somewhere else where nobody knew or could explain. She said she would fly and then she did it. It could be seen in the conversation between her and Ma Gedik before she jumped off the cliff and vanished.

“So I prefer to fly.”

“That's impossible,” said Ma Gedik, “you don't have wings.”

“If you believe you can fly, you can fly.”

To prove what she said Ma Iyang, with her naked body covered in drops of sweat that reflected the rays of the sun like beads of pearl, jumped and flew toward the valley, disappearing behind a descending fog. People only heard the sound of Ma Gedik's pitiful screams, as he ran down the slope looking for his love. Everyone searched for her, even the Dutchmen and the wild dogs. They scoured every corner of the valley, but Ma Iyang was never found, dead or alive, and finally everyone believed that the woman had truly just flown away. The Dutchmen believed it, and so did Ma Gedik. Now that all that was left was that rocky hill, the people named it after the woman who had flown off it into the sky: Ma Iyang Hill. (Kurniawan, 2016; 38-39)

There was no way she could survive the jump. Someone who jumped off the cliff couldn't be alive. It was proved by her lover, Ma Gedik, years later. He jumped off the cliff and dead with his bones cracked and scattered. So, technically, both Dewi Ayu and Ma Iyang broke the law of universe or nature. Yet, somehow people could accept it even no one dared to do the same thing.

### ***Phenomenal World***

The world which is similar with the one we live in will be the focus of this discussion. The kind of world which was described in details where the readers may experience idiosyncratic recreations of historical events. In the novel *Beauty is A Wound*, that world was a city called Halimunda that was very detail described.

And long before that, Halimunda had been nothing but a swath of swampy forest, a foggy area belonging to nobody. A princess from the last generation of the Pajajaran had run away to that region and given it a name. Her descendants had then developed it into villages and townships. The Mataram Kingdom banished their dissident princes there and the Dutch were originally completely uninterested in the district—the swamps threatened malaria, the flooding was uncontrollable, and the roads were in terrible condition. The first large ship to dock there came in the middle of the eighteenth century, an English ship named The Royal George,

which had come only to gather fresh water, not to trade. However, this made the Dutch administration a tad irate, suspicious that the English had in fact bought coffee and indigo, and maybe pearls, and maybe were smuggling weapons through Halimunda to store in Diponegoro. So finally the first Dutch expedition arrived, to have a look around and make a map. (Kurniawan, 2016; 47)

Later on, this city also became the place of massacre of communists which ever happened in Indonesia and their ghosts walked its streets and not long after the cleansing of the thugs also happened here.

### *The Unsettling Doubt*

This part is where even the characters feel doubt or hesitate and of course the readers feel it too. This happened to Rosinah, when Dewi Ayu gave birth to her fourth child, which of course a girl. She had no idea that such creature like that existed. A baby which was so hideous and monstrous she could not believe delivered by the most respected prostitute in the town with her ultimate beauty that could drive men crazy. She hesitated whether the very ugly baby, who later on named Beauty, was an actual baby or a pile of shit. Her hesitation can be seen as follows:

She wasn't even able to describe it, but she thought it looked like a cursed monster from hell. The baby's entire body was jet black as if it had been burned alive, with a bizarre and unrecognizable form. For example, she wasn't sure whether the baby's nose was a nose, because it looked more like an electrical outlet than any nose she'd ever seen in her entire life. And the baby's mouth reminded her of a piggybank slot and her ears looked like pot handles. She was sure that there was no creature on earth more hideous than this wretched little one, and if she were God, she would probably kill the baby at once rather than let her live; the world would abuse her without mercy. (Kurniawan, 2016; 4)

After Rosinah could stand the hesitation that seemed to confuse her very much, she could take it, even though she still had so many doubts about Beauty as the baby grew up.

### *Merging Realms*

The world of the living merging with the world of the dead meant that humankind interacted with the ghost. Two very different worlds connected one and another. The living entered to the land of the dead. This only could be done by Kamino, the gravedigger. By playing *jailangkung*, he called Mualimin's spirit or Farida's father when he was still alive, and let them having conversation. This was because how to play *jailangkung* had passed down from generation to generation of gravediggers. Kamino socialize with the dead people because nobody spent much time at the grave, nobody but Farida.

"True enough, but many souls of the dead are starving."

"You socialize with dead people?"

Kamino saw a small crack through which he could slip into the girl's life. "Yeah. I could even call your father's spirit if you wanted." And that was what happened. By playing *jailangkung* as he'd learned to do from his ancestors, Kamino called back the soul of Mualimin and let that old veteran possess his body. (Kurniawan, 2016; 38-303)

While Kamino play *jailangkung* to get into to the world of the dead and called Mualimin's spirit, while the ghosts didn't need to do such a thing. They could walk freely in the world of the living, especially communists' ghosts in Halimunda. The actual difference was the ghosts could do many things to men while men could do nothing to them. It is clearly seen in this passage below:

But no one suffered more terribly from ghosts than Shodancho. For years after the massacre he experienced terrible insomnia, and then when he did finally fall asleep, he suffered from sleepwalking. Communist ghosts were out to get him all the time, even sabotaging him at the trump table and making him lose again and again. Their constant annoyances were driving him insane—he'd often put his clothes on backward, or walk out of the house in his underwear, or go home to the wrong house. Or he'd think that he was making love to his wife but it turned out that he was fucking the toilet hole. The water in his bathtub would turn into a sticky pool of blood, and upon investigation he'd discover that all of the water in the house, even the water in the teapot and the thermos, had also suddenly thickened into dark red blood.

Everyone in the city sensed those ghosts and were terrified by them, but the most terrorized of all was Shodancho (Kurniawan, 2016; 345)

This was the evidence that two worlds that entirely different became one. Even the characters in it belonged to both worlds. The line was unclear which was which.

### *Disruptions of Time, Space and Identity*

In this novel, as indicated of magical realism, our senses of time and space is shaken or disturbed somehow. It happened as normal in realism of magical realism but it could never be referred normal in our senses. This can be seen when Maman Gendeng fought with Edi Idiot in a legendary fight between thugs or preman in order to decide who was stronger and the winner would have power over bus terminal and among the thugs. The legendary combat which lasted seven days and seven nights without rest. This epic fight can never be forgotten by people of Halimunda and can be seen in this quotation below,

Yes, a stranger arrived one morning, Maman Gendeng, and killed Edi after a legendary brawl that lasted seven days and seven nights. At first nobody believed that the hardheaded kid was truly dead, but then it was like they were awaking from a bad dream: Edi Idiot was mortal, just like anybody else. The city folk were incredibly thankful to that stranger, and Maman Gendeng was quickly accepted as one of their own. (Kurniawan, 2016; 251)

The legendary battle was one thing. There was also another thing which made our senses shaken over again. How come a bunch of soldiers who were tasked to drag Comrade Kliwon after the news of coup d'état spread didn't see him even though he was sitting at the veranda. At the very least our sense of seeing was shaken by this event. This is how the disruptions of time and space described

And Comrade Kliwon remained the most wanted man of all. Shodancho formed a special unit to capture him, dead or alive. Comrade Kliwon had in fact been sitting on the veranda with Adinda, patiently waiting for his newspapers, at the Communist Party headquarters when the special forces arrived. But swear to God, they didn't see those two. They charged in and tore the place apart,

ripping down the painting of Karl Marx and burning it on the side of the road along with the Party flag, the hammer and sickle, and all the books from the library, except for the books about silat, Indonesian martial arts, which Shodancho rescued for his own enjoyment. He'd led the attack himself, and he got two whole boxes of those silat books, which he immediately stashed in his jeep. All this happened right in front of Comrade Kliwon and Adinda's eyes, who were in shock that nobody noticed them. (Kurniawan, 2016; 308)

Magical realism also reoriented our sense of identities. Moreover, identity is constructed. Yet our sense of identity is forced to construct once more in order of reading magical realism. The identity of Krisan was once constructed or changed when he and Rengganis the Beauty had sex in school bathroom. He constructed himself as a brown dog with the black snout in order to get her provocative body which always he imagined. It didn't matter he disguised himself as anything as long as he could take a taste of that delicious body of her. This can be seen in this following quotation:

"You can just say that you were raped by a dog."

"I wasn't raped by a dog."

"Well, aren't I a dog?" asked Krisan. "You have often seen me bark and stick out my tongue, haven't you?"

"I have."

"So say that you were raped by a dog. A brown dog with a black snout."

"A brown dog with a black snout."

"And don't mention my name in this business, not even once." (Kurniawan, 2016; 413)

Rengganis also supported this identity later on when her mother began to ask her what had happened in the school bathroom to her and who was responsible when months later she got pregnant. She confessed undoubtedly that she was raped by a dog, a brown dog with black snout.

She stood up with the worry of a mother hen as the two young girls entered the yard and came to stand before her. Wanting to ask what had happened, Maya Dewi looked at Nurul Aini, but her face seemed as pale as a three day-old corpse. Ai was on the verge of tears and Maya Dewi hadn't had the chance to ask

anything when the Beautiful spoke.

“Mama, I was raped by a dog in the school toilet,” she said, calm and purposeful. “And maybe I’m gonna get pregnant.” (Kurniawan, 2016; 368)

The new identity of Krisan as dog wasn’t entirely surprising since he loved Ai who accustomed to live around dogs, the descendants of those *ajak* who were bred by his father. Krisan would bark, struck out his tongue, lifting up one leg when pissed in the bathroom even for the most extreme case, he dug up Ai’s grave with his hands and feet. He used his identity as dog to get what he desired, Rengganis’ body and Ai’s attention, but he could only get one of them.

### **Magical Realism as Historical Discourse in Eka Kurniawan’s *Beauty is A Wound***

This part provides the analysis of Eka Kurniawan’s *Beauty is A Wound* through new historicism’s method of investigation. In accordance to magical realism which had been discussed in the previous subchapter, this part is where the writer reveals discourses in the literary work since literature and history are nearly synonymous and interacts each other. Moreover, the historical background of a literary text is an important object to be investigated because there are behavioral codes that reside in a society’s rules of decorum. These codes simultaneously helped shaped and were shaped by the text (Bressler, 1994). The literary text is somehow couldn’t be separated with its historical background. In this part, an analysis of Indonesia long history is analyzed in order to reveal how *Beauty is A Wound* has participated in shaping and as a shape of the society’s rules. The writer also presents data from other sources in order to compare with the data found in the novel.

#### ***The Concept of Nyai***

The people of Indonesia had suffered during the colonization of the Dutch. Not only the reach of the lands that taken, but also the men to enslave and do the hard works and the women to satisfy the lust. An article which was written related to this matter was posted in <https://medium.com/@har2naghita.hs/nyai->

#### **[the-spirit-that-haunts-indonesian-women-81bbd925cbf1](#)**

During early Dutch colonization in East Indies (the name for Indonesia at the time), the Dutch colonizers settling in the Indies were only males following restricted immigration policies. This led to the use of native women as their sex slaves. When slavery was outlawed in 1860, the relationship changed, in which the native women became concubines to the Dutch men. The involvement of native women as concubines might not be as straightforward as it seems. It could be disguised under the colonial euphemism of “huishoudster” (a Dutch word for housekeeper). Beneath the partnership, it remains practically the same, namely, native women as sex slaves. During the later period of Dutch colonialism, some of the Dutch-indigenous couples legally married as concubinage was prohibited. This relationship between Dutch men and native women in turn predominantly bred into Eurasian descendants. Eurasian women. The native women involved in this type of relationship were mainly women in Java. One of the reasons is the predominant presences of Dutch colonizers in Java. Nyai, a word commonly used in West Java as a reference to a woman, or an elderly woman. Originally the word was used to show a respect. However, during the Dutch colony, the word had a derogatory meaning. In my opinion, it is not only necessary to unpack the stories of Nyai. It is also important to understand Nyai as a cultural trope, through which Indonesian women seek a reconciliation. This is not meant to reinforce the idea of certain ethnic (i.e. Java or Sunda) is superior to other ethnics in Indonesia, or the so-called “Jawa-sentrisme”. Rather, it was the colonial context, in which Indonesian women were largely directly exposed to the Dutch colonizers. This could be a start to reveal a similar trope that occurred outside Java, for example on plantations.

The concept of “nyai” was common act of the Dutch at the time of colonization. They could take any woman they desired, and if they refused, the family of the girl would suffer for the rest of their days. This discourse of “nyai” can be found in this passage.

“Where are you going?”

“To the house of a Dutch lord.”

“Why? You don’t have to become a maid for the Dutch.”

“I’m not,” said the girl.  
“I’m going to become his concubine. You can call me Nyai Iyang.”  
“Shit!” screamed Ma Gedik. “Why do you want to become someone’s concubine?”  
“Because if I don’t, Mother and Father will be made into breakfast for the *ajak*.”  
(Kurniawan, 2016; 32)

The native could not resist it. Since they had no power to do it and the Dutch would punish them. This practice of “*nyai*” had run for centuries. If the girl was taken by Dutch to be his concubine, she would belong to nowhere. Legally, she wasn’t Dutch since she wasn’t married in a legal marriage. And. For natives she considered as a whore since she would sleep and eat and live around the Dutch. So, both parties rejected her for being “*nyai*”. The practices of “*pernyaaian*” will breed the generation of “*indo*”, a child who half Indonesia and half colonial (Dutch).

### *The Continuity of Colonialism*

This is the tragedy that must be faced by the natives. In the long history of colonial, there was a time when the colonization of the Dutch was forced to change by the coming of the Japan and the defeat of Alliance Army. Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and it was fatal attack for the Alliance Army. After launched the attack, the Japan retreated to their homeland. Some of them tried to take over colonial land which belonged to the Alliance Army nations. Indonesia which was Dutch’ colony was their target. The Japan did this in order to enlarge their dominion over lands and to strengthen their power. Even though they came as saviors who promised independence for Indonesia, they still asked something in return. Seeing this phenomena, for the natives, whoever the colonial, the Dutch or not, they were all the same and it had nothing to do with them. This can be seen as an essay taken from <https://indonesialebihcerdas.com/history-in-english/collectivism-and-tolerantism-for-good-and-bad-the-root-of-indonesians-darkest-trilogy-bersiap-part-2/> quoted below:

The people who wanted independence,

whether it’s by political/diplomatic efforts, or by military/radical efforts, were the people at the top ladder, who usually were highly educated, either by the Dutch education system or by Muslim education system concentrated in Pondok Pesantren. This in turn provided this group of people enough information and ideas about what independence was and what independence would actually look like.

Meanwhile, people at the bottom ladder, mostly farmers, people who didn’t even receive any formal education or were even illiterate, they wouldn’t even bother thinking about independence at all. They were already busy thinking about feeding their family members, tending their lands, and trying to survive.

The same phenomenon also portrayed in the novel *Beauty is A Wound*, the situation and condition where Halimunda people didn’t put much attention since it was more of the same with the fate they have faced for generations. So, instead of getting involved with the war on their own lands, they continued to live their lives as usual. They needed to survive whichever side colonized them, since they had jobs to do in order to stay alive. This can be seen in the following passage;

It was only the natives who weren’t bothered by any of this—they still just did whatever it was they did. The cart-pullers still headed toward the port in droves, because trade kept going and the freighters kept moving. The farmers still worked their fields and the fishermen went to sea every night.  
(Kurniawan, 2016; 47)

The Dutch might have gone but the Japan coming. They would suck their rich lands, take anything they could, enslave the natives, waging a war in their own lands and much more terrible suffering. So, it didn’t matter which one had the power of the continent, as long as it was not native’s power, they didn’t much care, and they would do what they do every day. As long colonialism still going on, they would do anything as if it was normal.

### *Labeling and Forced Obedience to Colonialism*

Even though colonialism of Dutch and Japan ended, the people who used to work for the colonial would stay do what they were told

during the colonial era. Since they were slaves and didn't master anything else. Moreover, when the colonialism was surely over, they didn't know what to do. Since the colonial didn't let them to do anything except the orders they were given. This obedience and labeling can be seen in the article from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_asia/article/7xxbgq/is-anyone-really-pribumi/](https://www.vice.com/en_asia/article/7xxbgq/is-anyone-really-pribumi/) as follows:

At the bottom were the "inlanders"—or "pribumi"—a term that basically grouped together all the indigenous people who were already here when the VOC boats arrived. The VOC didn't care about indigenous groups or historical differences. They cared about ethnic restrictions instead. The pribumi class were governed by rules that unfairly limited their professions, political participation, culture, and even haircuts. When we look back on the VOC years, the pribumi class were seen as a vulnerable and oppressed people,

The same phenomenon also portrayed in the novel *Beauty is A Wound* when Indonesian people only trained to do what they told and did not master anything else since they were labeled as lowest caste.

Years later, after the war ended and the republic stood, she saw Muin again. At that time there were almost no Dutch families left, and no one was rich enough to have very many servants. She knew that Muin couldn't do anything much except set the table and work the gramophone; and there he was in front of the market playing the records inherited from her grandfather. (Kurniawan, 2016; 59)

The colonial didn't let them to learn to do something was because they didn't humanize the natives, or some say boemipoetra. They saw them as animals the same with the way they see black people, races that couldn't do anything on their own. After the Independence, they couldn't back to work to the lands they used to for. In fact, they didn't own their lands, legally. So, they just became ordinary people in ordinary world which differentiated them from the time they were colonized was they were free.

### *The Abuse of Prisoners of War*

During the World War II, women who were taken as prisoners would be prostitutes. The colonial had all the powers. In this case, it was

Japan who were doing it to the Dutch women. The article was taken from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/dutch-women-used-in-japanese-army-brothels-1534759.html> in order to support this assumption:

At least 35 Dutch women and possibly some British women were forced to work as prostitutes for the Japanese army in Indonesia during the Second World War, according to a Japanese newspaper report. The report widens the scope of investigations into the Japanese army's use of foreign women as prostitutes during its invasion of Asia 50 years ago, writes Terry McCarthy.

The Dutch ambassador in Tokyo yesterday refused to comment on the report. But a Japanese government spokesman said Tokyo would apologise to the Netherlands if the report was confirmed. Up to 200,000 women, mostly from Korea and South East Asia, were made to work as 'comfort women' for Japanese soldiers during the war.

The Asahi newspaper yesterday quoted documents from war-crime trials held in The Hague in 1948 at which 12 Japanese officers were convicted of operating brothels in Java in 1944. Thirty-five Dutch women testified then that they had been taken by Japanese officers from a prisoner of war camp and forced to work in a military brothel.

This was because the soldiers needed women. They were far from home and battling unpredictable wars with the guarantee of victory and defeat was equal. They might take any women and shared her for a battalion, but it meant the increased risk of getting genital diseases. Moreover, the best place to find fine women was war prison since they were well treated Dutch women, so their health was guaranteed. It also could be used as defense since however they were prisoners who need to be saved. *Beauty is A Wound* reflected this event as Dewi Ayu who was descendent of the Dutch taken as prisoners and forced to work as prostitutes for Japanese soldier during the World War II. This could be seen in quotation below:

“Don't you feel like something strange is going on?”

Aren't you worried about anything?”

“Worry comes from ignorance,” said Dewi Ayu.

“So you think you know what is going to happen to us?” asked Ola.

“Yes,” she replied, “we are going to be made into prostitutes.”

They all knew it, but only Dewi Ayu was brave enough to say it. (Kurniawan, 2016; 82)

So, in order to satisfy their desire of lust, Japan took prisoners of war and changed them into prostitutes. It was one way to save money since war cost so much and women wasn't the priority after all. Here, Dewi Ayu, the character who made it clear to other prisoners that they would be prostitutes, that was why they were well-treated. In order to decrease the risk of getting infected by genital diseases, the prostitutes would be taken care as pets. This act also could be seen as showing off powers to their enemies.

### *The Late News of Indonesia Independence*

Indonesia is consisted of many islands and sometimes people get to sail or fly to reach one island and to the other. And even if in the same island, not all areas covered the same facilities. So, it was very common to receive the news at the exact time, in this case, the news of Indonesia Independence. In order to strengthen the assumption of independence news which spread quite late, an article was quoted from <http://www.endofempire.asia/0821-news-of-indonesian-independence-spreads-3/>

Although Sukarno and Hatta had proclaimed Indonesian independence in Jakarta on 17 August, they had no effective means to spread this news to the people. In fact, because of the broken communication infrastructure, some of the territory covered by the proclamation and some of the people intended as citizens in the new state did not hear until months later. Even around the capital, Jakarta, the news took a day to reach some people.

In the novel *Beauty is A Wound* this event also reflected in Halimunda. The declaration of Indonesia Independence was proclaimed in August 17<sup>th</sup> and yet not all Indonesia people knew it. Indeed, it took very long time for the news throughout the cities and islands. Halimunda as a fictional was the example. The news reached there in 23<sup>rd</sup> September, about a month late.

“What date is it today?”

“The 23rd of September.”

“So we are more than a month late.”

“For what?”

“For the celebration.” Then he read them what was printed on the dead man's leaflet.

“PROCLAMATION: WITH THIS WE THE PEOPLE OF INDONESIA DECLARE OUR INDEPENDENCE . . .

AUGUST 17, 1945. IN THE NAME OF THE INDONESIAN PEOPLE, SUKARNO & HATTA.” (Kurniawan, 2016; 144)

This might happened to many cities and corners of Indonesia. The difficult tracks and roads were the one of the reasons why the news came late. In addition, the Japan with the power they had left trying to prevent the news to spread.

### *The Use of The Name Indonesia*

Indonesia used to call East Hindia since it considered as a part of Hindia or Dutch in the east (Asia). It influenced everything in there, such as the name *Indische Partij* (Partai Hindia). The first politic party established by Ki Hajar Dewantara, Douwess Dekker and dr. Cipto Mangunkusumo. Then, however, the first organization that used the name Indonesia was PKI or Partai Komunis Indonesia. Benedict Anderson, a well-known political scientist and historian wrote the truth of this in his article “*Indonesian Nationalism Today and in The Future*” as quoted below;

The concept ‘Indonesia’ was wholly foreign to him—as was the idea of ‘freedom’. Indeed, we all know that this strange Greco-Roman neologism is very new: it started to become well-known only about eighty years ago. The very first organization to use the word in its name was the Communist Party of Indonesia—in 1920 (when my mother was already a girl of fifteen).

Almost the same, in the novel, this information also clearly delivered by Comrade Salim, a member of communist party who on the run and he told this to young Kliwon, who in the future would be more known as Comrade Kliwon.

He admitted that he knew Semaun well and had been a member of the Indonesian Communist Party ever since its inception. When they were in Semarang he had even brought warm milk to Tan Malaka, who was sick with tuberculosis, every morning. The Partai Komunis Indonesia, the PKI, was the first organization to use the name Indonesia,

he said with pride. (Kurniawan, 2016; 172)  
Indonesian students at Netherland officially changed their association's name from *Indonesische Vereeniging* to *Perhimpunan Indonesia*. In accordance to this, its own newspaper also changed its name from *Hindia Poetra* to *Indonesia Merdeka*. Followed this circumstance, *Perserikatan Komunis Hindia* changed its name *Partai Komunis Indonesia* or PKI, so it was the first organization which used name Indonesia in Indonesia after all.

### ***The Failed Rebellion Against Dutch Colonial***

As one of the endeavors to gain independence, Indonesia people who gathered under communist's flag wanted to conduct rebellion. Since they felt that every man should get to work to get what they wanted. They must earn it, not only sitting and watch the others do the hard works for them. The supporting article of this assumption was quoted from <http://17marta.ru/forum/index.php?topic=2563.0> in the following passage;

In May 1925, the Exec Committee of Comintern in a plenary session ordered communists in Indonesia to form a united anti-imperialist front with non-communist nationalist organizations, but extremist elements dominated by Alimin & Musso called for a revolution to overthrow the Dutch colonial government. Splits among PKI leaders as to the timing and course of the revolution resulted in poor planning. Tan Malaka, at the time Comintern's agent for Southeast Asia and Australia did not agree with the plot, partly because he believed the PKI had insufficient mass support. As a result of these divisions, in June 1926, the revolution was postponed. However, there was a limited revolt in Batavia (as Jakarta was then known), which broke out on 12 November. Similar actions took place in Padang, Bantam and Surabaya. In Batavia, the revolt was crushed within a day or two, and after a few weeks it had been comprehensively defeated throughout the country. As a result of the failed revolution, 13,000 people were arrested, 4,500 imprisoned, 1,308 interned, and 823 exiled to Digul.

In accordance with the novel, this incident was explained by Comrade Salim as he told everything he knew and still remembered about

communism and Communist Party to young Kliwon while he memorized the event and waited for his certain death as follows;

Hesitation, he said, was the source of the Communist Party's failed revolution in 1926. He met with Tan Malaka in Singapore, after his first escape, to discuss their strategy. Tan Malaka strongly opposed the idea of revolution, because he felt the communists weren't ready. (Kurniawan, 2016; 173)

It was communist party that started the rebellion or "revolution" against Colonial government in 1926-1927 which spread into many colonized areas. This action led to the hunting of communist by the Dutch. All of the members were investigated and the leaders were exiled to Boven Digoel. This failed rebellion was believed because of lack of preparations and weapons even though the communist had the mass and could do the amok. After the rebellion, the Dutch keep an eye on watching over every step of the communist.

### ***Communist Manifesto***

In order of preserve the culture of the people and the traditions of the lands, the communist conserve the culture itself by singing traditional songs and played traditional games. The popular songs were forbidden due they weren't considered as songs for proletariat people and it against traditional ways of life. And of course, screamed their famous slogan. They also produced their own newspapers which were important to spread their ideology. The article which support this assumption was quoted from the source <http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl61/indonesi.htm> as follow:

In October 1915, ISDV began a publication in Dutch, *Het Vrije Woord* (The Free Word). The editor was Adolf Baars. In 1917 the reformist section of ISDV broke away and formed their own Indies Social Democratic Party. In 1917, ISDV launched its own first publication in Indonesian, *Soeara Merdeka* (The Voice of Freedom). In the 1950s, the party started publishing again, with the main organs being *Harian Rakyat* and *Bintang Merah*. The PKI committed itself to a nationalist position under the leadership of

Dipa Nusantara Aidit, supporting the anti-colonialist and anti-western policy of the Indonesian president Sukarno.

In accordance with what happened back then, these phenomena can be seen in the passage;

All the folk songs had been replaced with the *Internationale*, and all the closing prayers were offered with, “Workers of the world, unite!” (Kurniawan, 2016; 272)

Like all communists in every corner of the world, they obliged to sing their anthem *Internationale* and shout out loud their rallying cries, “workers of the world, unite”. This was how communist nailed their ideology in their members and society’s head. They would memorize the lyrics of the song and their spirit would burn out when they screamed their motto.

Not only through the changing of songs and the rallying cries, but also through the support of reading supply to strengthen their ideology to its member. It was important since people tend to pay attention to the text they had read not only the words or speeches they had heard. This can be seen as Adinda who read many books in communist headquarter;

Adinda read many books there. She read all the Gorky, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy novels he had. All of them were published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow, and sent through the Party. She read local novels too, and translated ones put out by Yayasan Pembaruan, the publisher of the Party, and the books of Balai Pustaka, which belonged to the government. (Kurniawan, 2016; 277)

The government had their own publisher, Balai Pustaka as quoted from the novel. The books which they published had to through complicated selections and editing and censored in accordance with Government requirements. The communist established their own publisher so they could produce their own reading without through all the complicated selections by the Government and as an act of protests that they could decide what kind of reading needed by the society.

#### *The Massacre of Communist, Root and Stem*

It was tragic incidents of Indonesia when the communist was issued in conducting *coup d'état* by murdering seven generals. This happened in 30<sup>th</sup> September night and 1<sup>st</sup> October in the early morning. Everybody barely knew this since the newspapers were gone. This mattered since news could be read in newspapers or listened in the radio. But, they were gone, all of media were gone or were taken by the most powerful unit of the nation; the army. The horror of this tragedy was recorded in an article written by Geoffrey Robinson entitled “*Down to the Very Roots: The Indonesian Army’s Role in the Mass Killings of 1965–66*” in Journal of Genocide Research as described in the following passage

The papers that were allowed to remain open, Angkatan Bersendjata and Berita Yudha, were controlled by the army itself. Before long, the army permitted other papers to publish, but always under the strictest control and “guidance” from the army information office. In practice, then, the papers that were permitted to publish were either run by army officers or closely parroted official army statements. The main message was that the PKI was guilty of treason. As the British ambassador reported to London on 19 October 1965: “Certainly the press and radio which since the 2nd of October had been entirely in army hands has kept up a steady supply of reports and articles pointing up the guilt of the PKI.

Even more important in fuelling the violence and killings, however, were the anticommunist vigilante groups that were mobilized after 1 October. Most of these groups were directly affiliated with political parties—such as NU’s Ansor and Banser, the PNI’s Pemuda Marhaen and IPKI’s Pemuda Pancasila. Other units, such as Hansip and Hanra, were part of the existing civil defence apparatus. After 1 October, all of these groups became, in effect, anticommunist militias. It was to these groups, and their leaders, that the army turned to identify and locate local PKI leaders and members.

While, synonymously with this event, in the novel it was reflected in the passage below;

“The army has forbidden the newspapers to publish anything.”

“But the newspapers don’t belong to the army.”

“But the army has weapons,” said Adinda.

(Kurniawan, 2016; 299-300)

After the vanishing of newspapers and the communist were suspected of the actors of the murder, the hunting of communist were began. Everyone who was labeled as communist would be taken care of. The army general announced that who were communist or had a relation to communist would be captured. And communist party was declared as forbidden party. The horror of the slaughtering the communist party members or participants were quite horrifying. This bloody tragedy was described as quoted;

That afternoon, in one quick massacre, one thousand two hundred and thirtytwo communists died, bringing an end to the history of the Communist Party in that city, and the entire country. (Kurniawan, 2016; 307)

“... after the troops and their trucks had gone and one thousand two hundred and thirty-two communist corpses had been buried in one mass grave,...” (Kurniawan, 2016; 307)

Since the dead bodies were quite many, they were buried in one big pit to save energy and space. It also saved times and could be used as warning for those who were interested in joining communist that communist would always meet tragic ending, one way or another.

### ***The Cleansing of Thugs in Order to Make Better and Safer Society***

The massacre of communists not only the tragedy of killing of thousands lives in Indonesia. There was also other massacre toward people who labeled as thugs or *preman*. This was done due to their acts that annoyed society in general. They didn't give any contributions but threats. They stole, got drunk and doing other things which considered dangerous to the society. The annihilation of the thugs also recorded in the article written Geoffrey Robinson entitled “*Down to the Very Roots: The Indonesian Army's Role in the Mass Killings of 1965–66*” in Journal of Genocide Research which supported the horror of The New Order Era led by Soeharto and it can be seen as described in the passage below :

From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, East Timor was a region closed not only to foreigners, but even to most Indonesians (who had to have a special pass to go there). Thus it

became a region where "anything went." Kopassus became the pioneer and exemplar for every kind of atrocity. Rapes, tortures, and executions were "normal." "Ninjas" started there too, hooded gangsters working as the left hand of the Spook. Over time, this "occupation culture" leaked out into the rest of Indonesia. We saw it in the mass murders engineered by Suharto, Murdani, and Kopassus in the petrus campaign of 1983. From there it moved to Aceh, Lampung, Irian, and elsewhere. Once peaceful regions became "troubled," not by their own will, but because they were "troubled" by the agents of the Spectre.

Not so different with what had written in the journal, *Beauty is A Wound* also portrayed the tragedy of obliterating the thugs or *preman* as quoted in the following passage :

The operation was carried out at night, so as not to induce a mass panic. The soldiers spread out, carrying weapons but dressed in civilian clothes, and so did the snipers, heading for the groups of thugs. They identified as thugs anyone who was tattooed, drinking alcohol, caught making trouble, or killing dogs, and all thugs were shot right where they stood, before being stuffed into a sack and thrown into the irrigation ditch or simply left lying by the side of the road. (Kurniawan, 2016; 434)

As soon as morning came on the first day, half the city's criminals had already disappeared, swallowed by those sacks that were tied with plastic cords. They were found along the roadways, bobbing in the river, lapped by the waves on the shore, in heaps under the bushes, and lying in the irrigation ditches. Some of them were getting pawed at by dogs, and others were being visited by flies. (Kurniawan, 2016; 434)

The massacre continued into a second night, and a third, and then a fourth night, a fifth, and a sixth and seventh. The operation was carried out swiftly, almost finishing off the entire supply of thugs in Halimunda. (Kurniawan, 2016; 435)

Those who were categorized as thugs were Men who had long-haired, tattooed, drank alcohol, wearing piercing, caught in troubles, or doing anything that disturbed the society would be categorized as thugs or *preman*. And all thugs must be obliterated in order of making the better, more comfort and safer environments for civilians.

### Magical Realism as Historical Discourse as Reflected on *Beauty is A Wound* and Challenging Indonesia History

New historicists believe, literary text should be treated equally with other historical texts since the literary work itself is a shape and shaped by the society. Mrázek (2016) point of view in his review which included in Cornell University's journal *Indonesia* that he had found that the novel just like a chapter in book. *Three daughters are born to her, like chapters in a book on Japanese War, National Revolution, Independent Indonesia*. He viewed *Beauty is A Wound* is a saga in which the modern history of Indonesia schleps from the late 1930s to the present. What historians call milestones climb one over the other and morph one into the other: 1938, 1942, 1945, 1965, until 1976, when one of the novel's heroes, an aging youth of the revolution, volunteers to go to do some killing in East Timor (about the time when Eka was born).

In addition, another research which challenged and presented comparative discourse to the history of Indonesia and related to the massacre happened was conducted by Muhammad Taufiqurrohman (2019) in "*Challenging the New Order's Communist Figures: A New Historicism Study on Penjagal Itu Telah Mati*". In the paper, Taufiqurrohman discussed the images of communist figures in Post-Suharto 1965 fictional narratives. Images of communists or alleged-communists appeared in many books and films produced under the Suharto regime as villains and atheists, antagonists of the nation who deserved to be jailed and killed. This paper, applying the descriptive-qualitative method and new historicism as theoretical framework, unpacks these infamous, stereotypical images of communists and alleged-communists and juxtaposes them with their counterparts in Post-Suharto 1965 fictional narratives. The end of the Suharto regime, which brought freedom of speech, enabled some victims of post-1965 tragedy (mostly ex-political prisoners) and their descendants to articulate a counter-culture and write other version of historiography.

### CONCLUSION

According to the finding and discussion in this study, the writer highlights some points as conclusions. Here are the points the researcher has drawn as follow.

The novel *Beauty is A Wound* has five magical realism's elements as formulated by Faris (2004), those elements are; first, irreducible elements as seen in the raised of Dewi Ayu from the grave, Ma Iyang who flew away into thin air, second, phenomenal world as fit in Halimunda, third, the unsettling doubts as faced by Rosinah when she saw Beauty baby and the home-coming of Maman Gendeng after he died, fourth, merging realms as shown by Kamino when he called for Mualimin's spirit and the walking ghosts of communist after the massacre, fifth, the disruptions of times, space and identity as described in the legendary fight of Maman Gendeng and Edi Idiot, Comrade Kliwon and Adinda who became invisible during the raid,

Then, the novel *Beauty is A Wound* can be considered as the reflection of Indonesia's long history, since the time of late Dutch colonization, the invasion of Japan, the Independence Era and the New Order Era. The late colonization of the Dutch described how the Dutch lived in Indonesia as its colony and how they took women as their *nyai*. When invasion of Japan, the native of Indonesia felt not so much different since they were still colonized. The abuse of prisoners of war also became part of the history. Then, the massacre of everyone who were labeled as communist, root and stem. Last, the genocide of all the thugs or *preman* in order to make safer and better society. In this novel, the history of Indonesia was camouflaged and mixed with magical realism because every event that categorized as magical realism led to the past events which related to the history of Indonesia..

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